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K Still Viewed as Seeker Of Peace Despite Threat

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Behind the warnings of dire consequences that re-echoed yesterday in the Cuban overflight dispute, the United States and the Soviet Union are both anxious to avoid inflaming East-West relations.

That was the judgment of many experts here as they analyzed what was said in Moscow by Premier Khrushchev, and more importantly, what was left unsaid.

Cuban Premier Fidel Castro's motivations are viewed with much greater uncertainty. His actions are considerably less predictable than Khrushchev's; the Soviet leader has shown his awareness that he bears the weight of war or peace.

What United States officials cannot be certain about is the amount of leverage that Khrushchev has on Castro's actions. Castro's repeated threat to fire on U.S. planes on reconnaissance flights over Cuba, however, was a carefully qualified statement, experts here noted.

The Cuban leader actually was saying that his island country first would use "legal means" to stop violations of Cuban airspace, and would resort to force only if that failed. That has been Castro's consistent position, officials pointed out, even though his stress on legal action has been overshadowed by his more belligerent talk.

Although Khrushchev warned that continued United States violation "can have dire consequences," his statement caused no special alarm to American officials.

May Day celebrations traditionally bring boastful talk in Communist capitals. Under the circumstances, Khrushchev's statement was "about the least he could do," one American expert said.

The overflight conflict is a leftover from the Cuban missile crisis of 1962. That crisis had special symbolism in the bitter rivalry between Communist China and the Soviet Union.

Peking seized on Soviet withdrawal of its long-range missiles from Cuba as proof that Khrushchev had "betrayed" Marxist-Lenin principles out of fear of the United States. Red China has gone on to accuse Khrushchev of "conspiring" with the United States.

The United States and the Soviet Union, it was learned, have recently had private exchanges about the need to keep the Cuban overflight dispute from reopening the 1962 missile crisis and inflaming East-West relations. The Soviet Union has warned publicly that the overflight conflict could impair East-West relations.

While no details are available on the American-Soviet talks, the import of the Soviet case was that, by publicly insisting on its overflight rights, the United States was causing a rebounding verbal conflict that could only harden public positions in Moscow and in Havana.

That public clash runs the danger of reopening debate on American and Soviet counterclaims about the culmination of the 1962 crisis, which were deliberately left clouded in diplomatic ambiguities.

Khrushchev said then that the Soviet Union had obtained assurances that the U.S. would not attack or permit an attack on Cuba after the Soviet missiles were withdrawn. But President Kennedy had said the no-attack promise was contingent on ground inspection to insure that the missiles were withdrawn, and that condition was not met. In fact, the continued American aerial inspection of Cuba became a tacit substitute for ground inspection, although the Soviets publicly deny that.

The U.S., in recent days, has trimmed back its public comments about the American overflights.

When asked for reaction to Khrushchev's comments yesterday, for example, State Department press officer Richard I. Phillips said only that the U.S. stood by its statement of April 20. In it, the Department had justified American determination to continue the overflights, and warned that attempt to halt them could create "a highly dangerous situation."

When asked whether the U.S. also stood by President Johnson's statement the following day that stopping the inspection flights would be "a very serious action," Phillips said that statement still holds, too.

Asked if the Kremlin had ever agreed to the overflights, Phillips said he could check the record on that. When asked if the Soviet Union at the time had protested the overflights, he replied "no."

In other words, the U.S.,



General Promoted

It's Maj. Gen. Frederick J. Clarke now. The promotion of the former District Engineer Commissioner became effective yesterday. Clarke is now Director of Military Construction in the office of the Chief of Engineers.

while protecting its position, was seeking to avoid any new provocative language yesterday.

The Defense Department yesterday denied a report that U-2 flights over Cuba had been discontinued. But it avoided any direct comment on whether new reconnaissance-plane equipment had put the overflights out of range of Soviet-built ground-to-air missiles on Cuba. Some sources discounted that report, too. A spokesman said "reconnaissance over Cuba continues essentially as it has in the past." He said the U-2s were "still flying," but added: "We do not comment on type of equipment or methods used . . ."